

"OPEN UP THEM PEARLY GATES:"
PATTERN AND RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN BLUEGRASS GOSPEL MUSIC

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My purposes here are fourfold. First, I will examine briefly the historical climate and cultural environment basic to an understanding of American evangelistic and fundamentalist Protestant religion, within which and as an extension of which bluegrass gospel music thrives. The chronological span is from the Eighteenth Century to the present; the approximate geographical area is the southern midwest to southeastern United States, from the Ozark Mountains to east Texas to the Atlantic coast; and the racial/ethnic milieu is white working-class (farm and mill workers) of conservative and tradition-minded British origins. Secondly, I will offer an explication of both the musical and cultural nature of "bluegrass." The bluegrass cultural setting is distinctively patrifocal, fundamentalist Protestant, of strict puritanical morality, and quite socially restrictive. Also, as a folk society, there is great stress upon cultural repetitiveness and continuity rather than on change and innovation. Thirdly, with reference to five familiar song texts taken to be representative of the repertoire as a whole, a pattern of commonplace themes which are basic and recurrent in the songs will be constructed. Lastly, I will view gospel bluegrass in the light of Ralph Linton's article on nativistic movements (1943), and Anthony F. C. Wallace's theories on revitalization movements. Linton's theory is the more applicable here, and it will be established that gospel bluegrass can be considered as rational perpetuative and revivalistic nativism.

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

2. Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight,
Angels descending bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

CHORUS

3. Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest.
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

CHORUS

(Gospel Hymns No. 5, 1887)

During the period from 1740 to 1840, Western Europe and the British Isles experienced an "institutional decline in early Protestantism" (Jackson 1941: 30-39). Numerous groups of dissenters, increasing in membership and strength, became dissatisfied with the overly-rigid Calvinist Protestantism, as well as with the Church of England (Anglican) and the Roman Catholic Church. With great expectations, these brotherhoods of Protestant dissenters, most of whom were of middle class stock and economically and culturally as well as religiously oppressed, traversed the Atlantic to the British colonies in America, hoping for religious toleration and relief from class persecution. But in the American colonies, the religious situation which met the immigrating Britons and West Europeans was a disappointing one. Instead of complete religious freedom, the eager English Moravians, Sandemanians, Baptists, Covenanters, Quakers, and Methodists ("Wesleyans") found the colonies to be inhospitable. Supported by the Crown, the organized churches were very strong, and one was obliged to attend services either under the Congregational Standing Order in the northern colonies, or under the Anglican Established Order in the south. In the newcomers disliked this situation, they simply had to "take on the backwoods and hill country" -- which is in fact what these groups of dissenters did (Jackson 1941: 33).

As we all know, the American Revolution provided not only political and economic "freedoms," but also immensely important personal religious freedom. The post-Revolutionary period witnessed significant changes affecting the American people, and was a critical transition stage in Protestantism and folk culture.¹ With the dissipation of the power and authority of the Church of England and the Congregational Standing Order, the old "established" religious institutions tottered, and the void left by these heretofore restrictive institutions was rapidly filled by new sects and denominations which were able to emerge from the backwoods and assume new roles of authority, status, and community cohesion. At the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, noninstitutional religious excitement was at its highest, and camp-meetings and "brush arbor" meetings became a sign of the times. Totally free from any and all restrictions, these camp-meetings were truly democratic, and truly "folk." The camp-meetings flourished, and in spite of modern announcements of their moribund state (Asbury and Meyer 1932: 169), they continue to be popular in many areas of the South. The brush arbor meetings were sectarian rather than extremely churchly -- this was a gospel for the poor and deprived, and a revolt against the older and more harsh established church patterns (Yoder 1961: 109).² The camp-meetings were strongly revivalistic and proselytizing, appealing to surging tides of Jeffersonian democracy and populism. "Rigid theory, emotionalism, and the emphasis upon individual salvation helped divert attention from the ills of society" (Ezell 1963: 348), and religious specialists not unlike Robert Lowie's "priests" gained widespread popularity and huge audiences for their evangelistic campaigns. The big northern revivalist was Dwight L. Moody, but the South had Samuel Porter Jones, Billy Sunday, J. Frank Norris, Mordecai Ham, Aimee Semple McPherson, and "Cyclone Mack" McLendon.³ The South still has the most homogeneous religious fabric of any geographical section of the United States. The point of the preaching was at bottom the same: one either repents and gains certain joy in Heaven, or one continues a "life of sin," inevitably leading to "eternal damnation." Many denominational splits occurred in the Nineteenth Century, with the new emphasis on science, modern intellectual thought, liberalism, Darwinian evolution -- in short, "the social gospel."

This was the period of America's Industrial Revolution, when rural society crumbled and the city with its strong urban culture supplanted the simpler small community life. Although the various Protestant denominations of the South show a significant "accord in the tenets which they preach" (Poteat in Couch 1934: 261), denominations divided frequently. This phase in American ecclesiastical history is well-documented and needs no long discussion here. Suffice it to say that the new industrial age caused great disruption of peasant life and morality, and caused people to look even closer to their "old-time religion" to assuage "wordly cares." Fundamentalist Protestant religion appealed strongly to the people's misery, social displacement, and disillusionment with the new social and economic situation.

Fundamentalists were those who proclaimed certain traditional doctrines as fundamentals of the Christian faith. They held to the inerrancy of the Scriptures, believing the literal truth of the miracles and repudiating any teaching which seemed to disagree. The Modernists (or Liberals) were those who tried to reconcile their beliefs with scientific thought. (Ezell 1963: 349)

The old-time camp-meetings were social as well as religious occasions -- along with the "message" and oratory, there was "dinner on the grounds," music, and general uplift and recreation for the whole community. Soon after the camp-meetings lost popularity in the mid-19th Century, organized churches in the towns gained strength. Music, indeed, was part and parcel of this folk religion -- in many cases the preacher with the most appealing hymns and music got the most converts. The songs were strongly emotional and sentimental, and have continued to flourish long after the demise of the old-time meetings. And though George Pullen Jackson, a reliable authority in most cases, calls these songs and hymns "mere relics" of the past (Jackson 1937: 39), they are in fact much more: they have survived in modern bluegrass gospel music in much the same shape, and for many audiences carry the same emotional freight as when they were sung in the arbors and big canvas tents a hundred and fifty years ago.

Fundamentalist religion places great emphasis on the individual, and his personal ability to achieve salvation. The doctrines of John Wesley aptly sum up the fundamentalist attitude: basically, that Christian perfection could be realized in this life on earth by all men. To the countryman, God provided through Jesus Christ "blessed assurance" that salvation (Jesus) is "mine," and that God's grace will heal his earthly wounds through His perfect love. Thus a "new life" is put within an easier reach of the folk than with the older, more rigid, and more complex church dogma. A penitent fellow can achieve salvation now, by bravely declaring his sins and sincerely asking forgiveness from God. But while God is loving, at the same time His judgment is "awful" -- sinners against His laws will certainly be punished by the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Father and suffer everlasting torment and pain in the terrible fires of hell. This view of a just but vengeful God is a traditional one, and conduces to good behavior and adherence to "the golden rule."⁴ Among fundamentalist denominations, some are known as "holiness sects," differing from other groups only slightly, and for convenience will be considered as being of a general type with other Protestant groups. These Pentacostal groups are the modern heirs to 19th Century revivalism, again

wherein salvation is not difficult to come by. The emphasis on conversion of the individual shows an attempt to "reorient" the individual's motivations and values in fundamental ways" (Benton and Johnson in Schneider 1964: 500). One's earthly woes are de-emphasized, with the main theological thrust against greed and worldly pleasures, and for joyful salvation and spiritual perfection.

Holiness sects are "otherworldly" in the sense of expecting the greatest personal joy in the hereafter, but it involves as a condition of this the devotion to doing the will of God in this world. This will can be realized in almost any kind of activity, but it demands constant output of effort, a denial of distracting pleasures, and a focus of achievement. The positive emphasis on self-application, consistency, and achievement, are the principal Holiness themes that directly converge within dominant American values.

(Benton and Johnson in Schneider 1964: 507)

A significant point about the development of American Protestantism is that here Protestantism has grown with the lower and working classes, quite unlike its growth in Great Britain and Western Europe where development was marked by "disengagement of Christianity from the working classes" (Winder in Schneider 1964: 446-47). The new Protestant churches in America capitalized on the religious potential of the emergent middle class, particularly after the Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century. These considerations, then, provide the religious background and environment from which bluegrass gospel takes its life and sustenance.

"Bluegrass" music is not to be confused with modern Nashville-oriented, innovative and glossy "Country and Western" music. Bluegrass is a sharply defined and totally American advanced form of early 20th Century rural string band music, coming for the most part out of the Southern Mountains of Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia. L. Mayne Smith has documented the origins and development of bluegrass into its distinct present shape in his Masters Thesis (Folklore Institute, 1964). For the most part, Smith's considerations are sufficient and accurate. Characteristics of bluegrass must include its "hillbilly" flavor. It is performed by professional, white southern musicians, primarily for a southern audience. Bluegrass is not dance music, but is intended for a back porch or concert situation. Bluegrass bands are composed of no less than three and no more than seven unelectrified instruments, with five-string banjo, guitar, and fiddle or mandolin indispensable.⁵ Vocalizations and instrumental integration are very complex and extremely highly-structured and organized, with contrapuntal harmony not unlike that in "ragtime" music and souther Negro "blues," from which bluegrass has drawn conscious and unconscious inspiration. Each instrument fills an individual and highly-personalized and formalized role within the group, and bluegrass is the "only string band style in which the banjo has a major role emphasizing melodic over rhythmic aspects" (Smith 1964: 9). Musicians and groups important to the development and stability of bluegrass include Bill Monroe (the "father of bluegrass") and the Bluegrass Boys, Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, The Country Gentlemen, Don Reno and Bill Harrell, Mac Wiseman, Lester Flatt and the Nashville Grass, and Jim and

Jesse and the Virginia Boys.⁶ The songs used in bluegrass, while many are composed and contemporary, are for the most part considered to be "traditional," and most conform to standard British-American ballad style. Nearly all are narratives, and convey a message of some sort. The singing style in bluegrass is clearly Scotch-Irish, Welsh, and Scottish, with emphasis on ornamentation and grace notes -- and is not (as is popularly believed) the same as the English singing style made popular and famous by F. J. Child in his collecting.⁷ Bluegrass "hymn" style is traceable at least nominally to 18th Century New England church hymn style, and at the same time traceable to Appalachian Mountains polyphonic style "derived from the shaped-note hymnals and singing schools of the 19th Century" (Chage 1955: 22-40), and modern Southern singing schools.

From the Industrial Revolution forward (1870), southern culture moved from country to urban, agricultural to industrial, and largely from "folk" to mass cultural patterns of living -- but bluegrass has consciously maintained its close reference to the "good old days" of rural populism, fundamentalist religion, and a sturdy agricultural tradition. Bluegrass has taken up modern urban subjects, but always the subject and message are made to conform to the traditional song style and instrumental patterns. There is absolutely no folk musical form that is more restrictive and bound by tradition than is bluegrass. Innovation is at a minimum -- and musicians who attempt to modernize the product are rejected or disapproved of by the conservative "old guard" audience.⁸ And the most tradition-bound and formalized aspect of bluegrass performance is the gospel song repertoire. Every bluegrass group that hopes for wide acceptance -- even groups comprised of "sophisticated" college students -- performs the "evergreens" and "antiques," as Ralph Stanley calls the old gospel hymns. A gospel song often opens a concert, and one or more gospel numbers certainly will be performed to close every bluegrass concert. The most respected gospel tunes are the older ones and even though they may not actually be very "old," if they are accepted by the audience and the performers as "evergreens," then they are treated accordingly. Audience contact is very important in bluegrass music. The performers continually promote conviviality and informality with their audience. Kinship terminology is often used in addressing an audience member or a fellow musician, e.g., "cousin," "uncle," and "boys." A sense of belonging to the community, a feeling of brotherhood and kinship makes for a friendly and warm atmosphere at performances. An account of Bill Monroe's yearly benefit for his church near White House, Tennessee suggests the bluegrass mind:

Once a year Bill Monroe puts on a program of gospel music for his church....to raise funds for the small church... it is clear that Bills enjoys the opportunity to present an entire program of gospel music and share with his friends, both of the church and visitors, the special joy that religious music brings to Bill...The crowd ranging from babies to oldsters enjoyed the songs and would join in whenever they were given the least encouragement. Unlike many audiences, they sang naturally and unaffectedly, and probably any one of them could have sung on the improvised stage...After a break during which homemade pies and cakes were served, Bill and the boys came on to do their part as a group...Bill, as always, the finest of the lot. It seems to matter how great a talent ever plays with

Monroe, he must be secondary to Bill's enormous genius. This is somewhat of a paradox because Bill surrounds himself with the best musicians that bluegrass has produced. He began with "Life's Railway to Heaven;" then went into "A Beautiful Life" and "One of God's Sheep"Throughout the entire evening Bill's sincerity was apparent; he said in introducing one number, "Now this is what I call a down-to-earth hymn." Almost all of his numbers were hymns instead of the more popular camp meeting songs. They were all delivered in Bill's ultra-personal style which showed his deep religious conviction as well as his vast talent. After three hours, Bill closed out the show, thanking the people for coming and supporting the church. From a free will offering, more than fifteen times the Sunday collection was realized for the work of the church.... (Koon 1970: 14)

This report is typical of the great respect and admiration with which the elder group leaders are treated. They have real power, calling the tunes, controlling the show, and setting the mood and character of the concert for both musicians and audience. Bill Monroe is the patriarch and archetype leader in every respect, and is the model for many younger and aspiring bluegrass group leaders. Monroe has enormous prestige and influence, and has personally and almost single-handedly molded bluegrass from its beginnings in the late 1930's to what it is today. Monroe has guided bluegrass along, through influences of ragtime, blues, and popular music but continually stressing its traditionality and continuity, and not its change. Bluegrass had always had as an essential instrument the fiddle -- and, as one might expect, this represents the oldest and most conservative aspect of the music. The emphasis is ever on the essential sameness and homogeneity of the music, but allowing for personal stylistic touches. In the Aran Islands, Gaelic and English languages both are spoken, but the older nationalistic and nativistic Gaelic is consciously perpetuated and accented. Similarly, although gospel songs and hymns of modern and popular origin are "accepted," it is the older ones which are the most emotive and most loved.

The gospel songs bound a bluegrass performance, opening and closing the show. Thus, according to Robert Redfield's theory, an occasion which is made for the most part "profane" is made for the tradition-minded country people into a "sacred" one. The audience does indeed come away from a concert, after the closing "hymns," as least temporarily cleansed, and feeling relieved of worrisome anxiety about the world -- which more often than not may seem to be a harsh, alien, fast-paced, and wicked place. The hymns reinforce the audience's conservatism, and help them "accept" the six o'clock news, adjusting to a world in conflict with and dominant over traditional folk values.

The importance of the group leader cannot be overemphasized. When he comes to the gospel section of the concert, he takes on a mantle of certain holiness. Position as leader is not based on organization genius but on superior technical ability and goodness as a man. The typical leader bears comparison to the country preacher, and indeed assumes an aura of shepherd, guide and father to his audience. He is utterly sincere, wise, unquestionably honest, and public-spirited. Like the funda-

mentalist preacher, the leader is aware that his occupation is definitely outside the stream of popular mass culture. Monroe himself continually reminds his audience that he's doing the "old-time" songs, and consciously harkens back to "the good old days."

Every nationally-known and widely-accepted bluegrass group has recorded a special "gospel album."⁹ And in fact nearly every bluegrass album does contain a token gospel song, testifying to the importance of the gospel repertoire to both audience and performer.

Bluegrass is vigorously defended by its adherents on religious grounds. The bluegrass context is a reverent, "honest," "all-American" one. Bill Monroe does not drink alcoholic spirits, and does not allow his band members to imbibe, either. All endeavor to be hard-working, God-fearing citizens, and if a performer has a devilish streak, he either conceals it carefully or is looked down on by his colleagues and audiences.¹⁰ This overly moralistic attitude is typical of the restrictive Puritan fundamentalist mind. Notwithstanding certain popular young bluegrass performers, even the dress of the "stars" must be conservative and traditional. While a Ray Price or an Ernest Tubb in Country and Western circles may sport gold-sequined western suits and sterling silver cuff links, the typical bluegrass star may wear a conservative suit and old-fashioned string tie. The point is that the bluegrass milieu, like the Irish peasants', requires restriction, conformity, and continuity in behavior, appearance, religion, and attitude -- all clearly evident in the conservative nature of the gospel repertoire. As Redfield notes, "sacredness" is very much characteristic of a folk society. And bluegrass provides a strong centripetal force, bringing all the various cultural aspects together in the form and message of the music.

Five gospel songs were selected as representative of the repertoire as a whole, and clearly demonstrate the recurrent theological themes. The five songs are "I Am A Pilgrim," "Amazing Grace," "I'll Fly Away," "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," and "Somebody Touched Me." The texts are provided in Appendix A. A master list of two hundred-plus gospel bluegrass songs is provided in Appendix B. Appendix C is a brief selected concordance, suggesting the type of popular and identifiable Biblical references often found in the songs themselves. The songs as we now have them are for the most part survivals of their progenitors; i.e., many were composed and formalized a hundred years ago, but have since been taken into oral tradition and considered to be "traditional" and in the public domain.¹¹ Here is a clear case of syncretism: many present texts are rather bland, and many lack the punch they had in the past when they were intended for a more specific audience. Many are diluted reinterpretations of the originals. But the presentation and rejection or acceptance of texts over time by conglomerate audiences has forced the more esoteric texts to be laid aside and the more universally appealing and acceptable texts to endure and be repeated. Instrumental accompaniment is minimal in gospel numbers, and the three and four part vocal harmonies become the chief musical element. Bluegrass vocalization is marked by "the high lonesome sound," and a high clear tenor voice is highly admired. Many gospel songs are sung a capella, and contain recitations and forthright prayers.¹²

Five "themes" have been sorted out; the applicable ones are noted in the textual transcription in Appendix A. These are recurrent themes which

form a pattern throughout bluegrass gospel songs:

1. Individual salvation. This is the chief theme, and occurs at least implicitly in nearly all gospel songs. All five sample texts clearly indicate the performer's hope or expectation of making it to "that yonder city." Emphasis is always on the individual being "saved," "touched" by "the hand of my Lord." God will "make me whole," and "I'll fly away" to Heaven. The expectation of a heavenly reward is strong in the minds of the penitent and reverent.

2. Life's rocky road. Closely related to the theme of salvation is the journey all Christian men must endure. Our earthly sentence is fraught with perils; and we must be strong in our belief that God will lead us triumphantly through this "vale of tears" and these "wicked paths of sin." A pilgrim's progress is not pleasant or easy; the goal is far, but worth the trip.

3. The maternal hearth. Country people have a special love for "the old home place" and for mother. Paradoxically, although bluegrass is decidedly patrifocal -- men are usually the leaders and performers -- nearly all sacred songs about a family member speak of dear mother and her wonderful love. The mother presides over the rural and mountain home and hearth, providing security and devoted love for spouse and children. The geographical location of the maternal hearth would seem to be somewhere and everywhere in "the sweet, sunny South."

4. Grief for the deceased. And when mother passes away, even though she's "surely" gone to Heaven, the survivors feel intense grief. The pain of loss of a loved one extends beyond the nuclear family to dear friends, and to one's faithful canine companion.¹³

5. The good Christian's "action orientation." The attitude of "good works" and success in one's endeavors has in no small way helped build America. It suggests the colonial Puritan doctrine of the efficacy of works in gaining God's grace. The conscientious Christian works on a "building for the Lord" -- and he wants to be ready for the judgment and to be able to show by the fruits of his labors that he has used his talent and abilities to further the Kingdom of God and to improve materially the condition of this world.

These five themes are basic to all sacred Protestant music. The very titles of gospel songs suggest their thematic content. Note in Appendix B the frequency of "mother," "I," etc. I have indicated by number which of the above themes seems elemental to each of the songs in this general repertoire.

The pattern of the religious themes in the songs is obvious, and clearly reveals a folk world view. The same themes are consistently repeated, showing the aspects of Protestant dogma which are most universal in application and acceptance.

This article to this point has I think suggested the pertinence of Linton's article "Nativistic Movements." What this paper is all about is in fact musical nativism. According to Linton, a nativistic movement is "Any conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture" (in Lessa and Vogt 1968: 449). To this, gospel bluegrass music can accurately and justifiably be viewed as rational, revivalistic and perpetuative nativism. "Selected aspects" of the bluegrass cultural background are purposely revived and perpetuated by group leaders and performers, consciously appealing to the good old days and pioneer vigor, in an effort to inspire favor and respect for the music and the old hymns in the audience. Bluegrass is considered superior to modern popular music, partly on the basis of the essential purity and excellence of the songs and the instruments, and also on the grounds that when something is old and somehow connected with the nation's old and cherished ideals it merits preservation and revitalization.¹⁴

Bluegrass is very highly "organized," with an increasing schedule of festivals, gospel jubilees, and concert tours by the professional groups. With regard to attitudes of superiority and inferiority, the bluegrass gospel audience may be labeled "dominated-superior." (Linton in Lessa and Vogt 1958: 503.) But the label is actually ill-fitting, because the "dominant" group (the urban, educated upper-class) has an ever-growing number who are becoming devout bluegrass aficionados. Excluding lynchings, I can think of no other American public event where people of such highly contrasting backgrounds and values can come together in complete, if temporary, harmony than a large bluegrass festival.¹⁵ Bluegrass nativism crosses all denominational and social class boundaries, but all members of the audience syncretize their own attitudes and religious feelings into one strong fundamentalist Protestant unit. Bluegrass, like all other nativistic institutions, has selected the best and most appealing of the past music and religious elements. The gospel repertoire that is revived and preserved represents on the whole the most familiar and reassuring of the hymns. The songs help resolve the community's anxiety by verbally presenting their fears, hopes, and attitudes about death, Malinowski's "supreme and final crisis of life." Protestants have no absolution or confession as Catholics have -- and a periodic communion ritual is not sufficient to assuage their fears. Gospel music allows people to feel "saved" and to express their belief in salvation.

Anthony F. C. Wallace's study applies to gospel bluegrass: the performance situation may be viewed as a rite of intensification, "restoring" people to their "attachment to the values and customs of the culture." The gospel hymns at the close of a performance remind the people to "apply the religiously-sanctioned values to the routine problems of daily living" (Wallace 1965: 130-31). With reference to Wallace on revitalization movements, gospel bluegrass does "provide immediate personal salvation to the presently afflicted," but only in a partial and momentary psychological way does it "reorganize the culture in such a manner that a better way of life is brought into being" (Wallace 1965: 164). Traditional fundamentalist religion has always been primarily interested in the affairs of the soul and not the affairs of the world at large. The new technological age has threatened folkbelief and wisdom along with the old-time religion -- but bluegrass gospel music seems to gain in strength and popularity.

In sum, bluegrass gospel music is distinctly conservative and stresses continuity rather than innovation. There is a pattern of certain recurrent themes observable in the song repertoire. And significantly, bluegrass can clearly be seen as a rational perpetuative and revivalistic movement, operating as a consciously old-fashioned and tradition-minded cult institution. Bluegrass gospel music is somewhat remote from mass culture, and its adherents though of diverse ethnic identity emphasize their oneness in admiring the old-time music and religion.

NOTES

1. Other periods of transition or "folk watersheds" of importance with regard to Protestant religion were the Civil War, Industrial Revolution, World War I, and the Great Depression.
2. The brush arbor meetings "created a substitute-culture for itself, therefore it opposed the dominant trends in American culture" (Yoder 1961: 110).
3. These famous proselytizers practiced their trade across the country, but their strongest bonds of affection were with the South, where their ministrations and appeals seemed to be the most appealing and pertinent. Both McPherson and Sunday are considered as revivalists "gone wrong"-- both surrounded themselves in luxury, were egotistically convinced of their union with God, and attracted worshipful throngs of ecstatic followers. Both would be fit subjects for study in relation to millenarian and messianic cults. The modern "Bible belt" area reflects the earlier geographical pattern of camp-meetings and later revivals.
4. The "golden rule" ("Do unto others as you would have others do unto you") together with John 3:16 ("God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life") are the root phrases about which all fundamentalist belief can be gathered.
5. This is the current situation. In the early days (late 1930's and early '40's), when Bill Monroe was consciously developing the bluegrass sound, his band's instrumentation lacked the appeal it gained when Earl Scruggs joined the group in 1945 with his sharply-defined and innovative three-finger banjo style. The early Monroe groups were led instrumentally by the syncopated, jazz and blues-influenced mandolin work of Monroe, and various traditional fiddlers.
6. Other "big names" and popular groups: Doc Watson, Jimmy Martin and the Sunny Mountain Boys, the Osborne Brothers, the Lilly Brothers, the Stone Mountain Boys, the Kentucky Colonels (disbanded), Carl Story and the Ramblin' Mountaineers, the Lewis Family, Hylo Brown, Red Allen and the Kentuckians, Bill Clifton, Earl Scruggs, the Barrier Brothers, the Ozark Mountain Trio, the Bluegrass Alliance, the Dillards (disbanded), the Goins Brothers, the McCormick Brothers, J. D. Crowe and the Kentucky Mountain Boys, the Dixie Bluegrass Boys, the House Brothers, and the Cannan Valley Boys. Note the great number of brother and family groups, reinforcing the familial, communal, "folksy" atmosphere of bluegrass.
7. Henry Glassie has carefully demonstrated this fact, providing important theoretical qualification of standard beliefs about folk song style in the Southern Mountains.

8. For example, the Osborne Brothers, an important and popular group, "plugged in" their banjo and mandolin to electric sound amplifiers not long ago, and were severely criticized for destroying the traditional purity and sanctity of the acoustic instruments. The debate is hotly contested and wears on.
9. For example, Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys' album "A Voice From On High," Jim and Jesse and the Virginia Boys' "Country Church," and the Stanley Brothers' "Hymns of the Cross." Groups almost exclusively performing gospel music include Carl Story and the Ramblin' Mountaineers, the House Brothers, the Canaan Valley Boys, and the Lewis Family.
10. For example, although Scotty Stoneman was and is one of the finest bluegrass fiddlers, he has taken to the bottle and was regularly in his cups, and for this reason he is poorly thought of by many conservative country people. **This is of course strictly hearsay.**
11. The ultimate sources for many gospel hymns are known. Jackson (1937) sets up three song types: "folk hymns" from 18th Century writers of religious verse, "revival spiritual songs" from anonymous rhymsters, and "religious ballads" from illustrative Bible stories and parables. The chief folk element in all is the tune, most of which are traditional and formulaic. Although certain bluegrass gospel tunes are of known authorship (e.g. "Rock of Ages" by Augustus Toplady, published in 1776), the matter seems of small consideration. The folk themselves recognize no such formal authorship and regard all commonplace songs as community property.
12. A perfect example is "Father's Table Grace" by Flatt and Scruggs. Sincerity and emotion are evident in the "delivery" of such gospel numbers.
13. Somewhat comically, no gospel song is any more intense about the loss of a beloved companion than the secular ballad "Old Blue," a mournful wish that the faithful hound will be waiting for his master in Heaven for that big fox chase in the sky.
14. Connected with this is the national urge to record, collect, and preserve anything so long as it is old -- regardless of historical, cultural or aesthetic significance. Bluegrass is a relatively modern development, but is nevertheless advertised as being old-fashioned.
15. The most popular and celebrated bluegrass festival of all is held each June in Bean Blossom, Indiana, under the benign but firm guidance of Bill Monroe. Tens of thousands of "fans" from every state and from every social environment meet together for a week of bluegrass at its best, with everyone taking part and enjoying the old brush arbor meeting community feeling. About the only feelings of inferiority to another fellow come when, in a jam session, one is asked to take an instrumental melodic "break" -- and "blows it" badly....

Appendix A: Five Representative Texts

The songs below are exemplary of the repertoire as a whole. The versions were chosen arbitrarily; since they are now considered to be "traditional" and in the public domain, no authorship is ascribed, but rather performers associated with each song's wide acceptance and popularity are cited. The performers cited reflect my own collection and information, and therefore the listing is not exhaustive.

1. "I Am A Pilgrim" -- Bill Monroe (Decca), Country Gentlemen (Folkways), Merle Travis (Capitol).

- (1) I am a pilgrim and a stranger,
Traveling through this worrisome land;
I've got a home in that yonder city, good Lord,
And it's not made by hand.
- (2) I'm going down to the river of Jordan,
Just to ease my troubled soul;
If I could touch but the hem of His garment, good Lord,
I do believe it would make me whole.
- (3) I've got a mother, a sister and a brother,
Who have gone on before;
And I'm determined to go and meet them, good Lord,
Over on that other shore.

Themes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

2. "Amazing Grace" -- Doc Watson (Elektra), Jean Ritchie, Clarence Ashley, Roscoe Holcomb (Folkways), Estelle C. Ball (Atlantic).

(Chorus) Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see.

- (1) 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fear relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed.

(Chorus)

- (2) When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun;
We've no less days to sing God's praise,
Than when we first begun.

(Chorus--end)

Themes: 1,2.

3. "I'll Fly Away" -- The Dillards (Elektra).

(1) Some glad morning when this life is o'er
I'll fly away;
To my home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away.

(Chorus) I'll fly away oh, glory,
I'll fly away;
Bye and Bye, hallelujah in the sky;
I'll fly away.

(2) When my life in this weary world is o'er,
I'll fly away;
And leave the world of trouble and of sorrow,
I'll fly away.

(Chorus)

Themes: 1, 2.

4. "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" -- Stanley Brothers (King), Carter Family (Victor), Country Gentlemen (Folkways).

(1) I was standing by the window,
On one cold and cloudy day;
And I heard the hearse come rolling,
To carry my mother away.

(Chorus) Will the circle be unbroken,
By and by Lord, by and by;
There's a better home awaiting,
In the sky Lord, in the sky.

(2) Lord I told the undertaker
"Undertaker please drive slow;
For this body you are hauling
Lord I hate to see her go."

(Chorus)

(3) I followed close behind her,
Tried to hold up and be brave;
But I could not hide my sorrow,
When they laid her in the grave.

(Chorus)

(4) Went back home Lord, my home was lonesome,
Since my mother she was gone;
All by brothers, sisters crying,
What a home, so sad and alone.

(Chours--end)

Themes: 1, 2, 3, 4.

5. "Somebody Touched Me" -- The Dillards (Elektra), Bill Monroe (live performance).

(1) While I was singin' somebody touched me,
While I was singin' somebody touched me,
While I was singin' somebody touched me,
It must of been the hand of my Lord.

(Chorus) Glory, glory, glory, somebody touched me,
Glory, glory, glory, somebody touched me,
Glory, glory, glory, somebody touched me,
It must of been the hand of my Lord.

(2) While I was prayin' (etc.)

(Chorus)

(3) While I was preachin' (etc.)

(Chorus--end)

Themes: 1, 5.

Appendix B: Bluegrass Religious Songs

A selected list of religious songs performed at present in the bluegrass style is included here. Professional bluegrass groups and performers who have made a significant contribution to this list and who are currently performing include the following: Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys, Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys (formerly the Stanley Brothers), Lester Flatt and the Nashville Grass (formerly Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys), Don Reno and Bill Harrell (formerly Don Reno and Red Smiley and the Tennessee Cutups), the Country Gentlemen, the Osborne Brothers, Mac Wiseman, Jim and Jesse and the Virginia Boys, Doc Watson, and Jimmy Martin and the Sunny Mountain Boys. Each of these songs has explicit religious content in varying degrees.

Asterisks indicate those songs which I take to have been stable in both popularity and frequency of performance. Numbers following titles indicate the predominant theme of each song. The five themes, as detailed in the body of this paper, are: 1) individual salvation, 2) life's rocky road, 3) the maternal hearth, 4) grief for the deceased, 5) the good Christian's "action orientation."

Abide with Me (1)
A Crown He Wore (1)
A Few More Seasons (2)
Along the Way (1)
An Empty Mansion (4)
Angel Band (1)
A Pretty Wreath on Mother's Grave (4)
A Rose-covered Grave (4)

A Rose on God's Shore (1)
A Voice From on High (1)
Back to the Cross (1)
Beautiful Picture (3)
Beautiful Star of Bethlehem (1)
Beside the Still Waters (1)
Bouquet in Heaven (1)
Bringing in the Sheaves (2)

- Building on That Rock (5)
 Bury Me Beneath the Willow* (1)
 Can't Feel at Home (2)
 Do Lord (1)
 Don't Forget to Pray (1)
 Don't this Road Look Rough and Rocky (2)
 Drifting Too Far From the Shore (2)
 Dust on the Bible (3)
 Farther Along* (1)
 Father's Table Grace (2)
 Five Days of Heaven (1)
 Gently Lead Me (1)
 Get Down on Your Kneew and Pray (1)
 Give Me the Flowers While I'm Living (2)
 Give Mother My Crown (3)
 Glory Bound Train (1)
 God Loves His Children (1)
 Going Home (1)
 Gospel Plow (2)
 Grave on the Green Hillside (3)
 Happy on My Way (1)
 Have You Someone (1)
 Hear Jerusalem Mourn (2)
 Heaven and a Million Years in Glory (1)
 Heaven's Light is Shining on Me (1)
 Heavenward Bound (1)
 Hello Central, Give Me Heaven (1)
 He's Coming Back to Earth Again (2)
 He Will Set Your Fields on Fire (1)
 Hide in the Blood (2)
 Higher in My Prayers (1)
 Highway of Sorrow (2)
 Hobo's Lullaby (2)
 Hold Fast to the Right (5)
 Home of the Soul (1)
 Honky Tonk Girl (2)
 How About You (2)
 How Beautiful Heaven Must Be (1)
 How Can We Thank Him for What He has
 Done (1)
 I am a Man of Constant Sorrow* (2)
 I am a Pilgrim* (2)
 I Could Hear the Angels Sing (1)
 I Didn't Hear Nobody Pray* (2)
 I Feel Like Traveling On (2)
 If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again (3)
 I Found the Way (2)
 If We Ever Meet Again (1)
 I Hear A Sweet Voice Calling (3)
 I Like the Christian Life (5)
 I Like to Hear Them Preach It (5)
 I'll Be Going to Heaven Sometime (1)
 I'll Fly Away (1)
 I'll Meet You in Church Sunday Morning
 (1)
 I Long to See the Old Folks (3)
 I'm Getting Ready to Go (2)
 I'm Going to Make Heaven My
 Home (1)
 I'm H-A-P-P-Y to be S-A-V-E-D (1)
 I'm Living the Right Life Now (1)
 I'm Working on a Road to Glory
 Land (5)
 In Beulah Land (1)
 I Need Prayers (2)
 In the Garden (1)
 I Shall Not Be Moved (2)
 It's All Right Now (1)
 It's a Weary, Weary World (2)
 I Want to Live Like Christ (1)
 Jesus is Standing at My Right
 Hand (1)
 Jesus Savior Pilot Me (2)
 John 3:16 (1)
 Joy Bells (1)
 Just Dropped By (1)
 Keep a Memory (3)
 Keep on the Sunny Side* (2)
 Let in the Guiding Light (2)
 Let Me Rest and the End of My
 Journey (1)
 Letter Edged in Black (2)
 Let the Church Roll On (5)
 Let the Light Shine Down* (1)
 Let the Light Shine on Me (1)
 Life is Like a Mountain Railway*
 (2)
 Life's Railway to Heaven (2)
 Little Bessie* (3)
 Little Community Church (5)
 Little Glass of Wine (2)
 Little Moses (5)
 Lonesome Valley (2)
 Lord I'm Coming Home (1)
 Lord I Want to be a Christian
 (1)
 Lord Protect My Soul (1)
 Mansions for Me (1)
 Master Builder (5)
 Matthew 24 (5)
 May You Never Be Alone (2)
 May You Never Be Alone Again (2)
 Memories of Mother and Dad (3)
 Methodist Pie (5)
 Midnight on the Stormy Deep (2)
 Mother Left Me Her Bible (3)
 Mother No Longer Waits for Me
 (4)
 Mother Prays So Loud in Her
 Sleep (2)

Mother's Footsteps Guide Me On (4)	The Master's Bouquet (1)
Mother's Only Sleeping (4)	The Old Book of Mine (3)
Mountain Church (5)	The Old Cross Road (2)
My Mother's Bible (3)	The Old Gospel Ship (2)
My Shepherd is God (1)	The Old Fashioned Preacher (5)
Nail Scarred Hand (2)	The Old Rugged Cross* (2)
No Mother or Dad (3)	There Ain't Nobody Gonna Miss Me
No School Bus in Heaven (1)	When I'm Gone (2)
Oh, Death (2)	There's a Star-Spangled Heaven (for
Oh, Those Tombs (2)	Every Soldier Boy) (2)
Old Time Religion* (1)	The River of Jordan (1)
One of God's Sheep (1)	The Sunny Side of Life* (2)
On That Rock Where Moses Stood (1)	The Sweet By and By (1)
On the Jericho Road (2)	The Unquiet Grave (2)
Open Up Them Pearly Gates (2)	The Wild Side of Life (2)
Paper Boy (2)	They Laid Him in the Grave (4)
Passing Through (2)	This World's No Place to Live (2)
Pass My Not (2)	Till the End of the World Rolls
Paul and Silas* (1)	Round (2)
Peace in the Valley* (2)	Tramp on the Street (2)
Plant Some Flowers on My Grave (3)	Traveling the Highway Home (2)
Pray for the Boys (3)	Tree of Life (2)
Preaching, Praying, Singing (5)	Turn Your Radio On (2)
Precious Memories (3)	Twelve Gates to the City (5)
Rank Strangers (1)	Two-Dollar Bill (1)
Reunion in Heaven (1)	Voice of My Savior (1)
Roll Jordan Roll (5)	Walking in Jerusalem* (1)
Room in Heaven for Me (1)	Wait a Little Longer Please Jesus (2)
Rosewood Casket* (4)	Wait for the Light to Shine (2)
Sand and Lonesome Day (4)	Washed in the Blood (1)
See That My Grave is Kept Clean (2)	Way Down Deep in My Soul (1)
Shake Hands With Mother Gagin (4)	Wayfaring Stranger (2)
Since I've Used My Bible for a	We'll Understand it Better (2)
Roadmap* (2)	Were You There (2)
Softly and Tenderly (2)	What a Friend We Have in Jesus* (1)
Some Beautiful Day (1)	What Would You Give (2)
Somebody Touched Me* (1)	When I Reach that City (1)
Something Got a Hold of Me (1)	When Jesus Beckons Me Home (1)
Sowing on the Mountain (2)	When the Saints Go Marching In* (1)
Streets of Glory (2)	Where Could I Go (1)
Sweeter as the Years roll by (1)	Where the Soul Never Dies (1)
Sweetheart in Heaven (4)	While Eternal Ages Roll (2)
Take Me in a Lifeboat* (1)	Wicked Path of Sin (2)
Take My Hand Precious Lord (2)	Will My Mother Know Me (4)
That Home Far Away (1)	Will the Circle be Unbroken* (3)
The Angels are Singing (1)	Won't It be Wonderful There (1)
The Bubblin' in My Soul (1)	Working on a Building* (5)
The Darkest Hour (2)	You Want to Pray to the Lord When
The Devil's Own (2)	You See Those Flyin' Saucers (2)
The Fields Have Turned Brown (2)	
The Glory Land Way (1)	
The Great Judgment Day (2)	
The Great Speckled Bird* (5)	
The Little Brown Church (5)	
The Lord's Last Supper (2)	

Appendix C: Selected Concordance

An index to Scriptural references is included here to suggest the proximity of common passages to the gospel themes in the bluegrass repertoire; there is a demonstrable relationship. This is a random selection, to serve as a sample and not as an exact concordance. I am aware of the danger of imposing my personal bias on what is relevant to the songs. By way of a thorough childhood "Protestant religious education" and the attendant familiarity with common Biblical passages, and through close observation of gospel music over the past years, I feel an acceptable ability to choose pertinent quotations. One must bear in mind that even today "country people" are quite able to quote chapter and verse and can recognize favorite passages of special meaning. It is some of those passages of "special meaning" that are listed below. This list is of necessity highly selective. Many entries are from Sankey, McGranahan and Stebbins (Gospel Hymns No. 5, 1887), and all are clear in their "messages."

I press toward the mark. Philemon 3:16

I will sing praises unto my God. Psalms 146:2

A fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Zechariah 13:1

For with Thee is the fountain of life. Psalms 36:9

Joy cometh in the morning. Psalms 30:6

In whom we have redemption through His blood. Ephesians 1:7

But it is good for me to draw near to God. Psalms 73:28

He that liveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. 1 John 4:8

I will both search My sheep, and seek them out. Ezekiel 34:11

Give unto the Lord glory and strength. Psalms 96:7

This is indeed the Christ the Savior of the world. John 4:42

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Acts 16:31

I will come again. John 14:3

My son, give Me thine heart. Proverbs 23:36

He that believeth in the Son shall have everlasting life. John 3:36

Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh. Matthew 24:44

Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. John 6:37

When the chief Shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 1 Peter 5:4

Ye are not your own. 1 Corinthians 6:19

For I know that my Redeemer liveth. Job 19:25

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
John 3:16

Thou are not far from the Kingdom of God. Mark 12:34

Look unto me, and be ye saved. Isaiah 45:22

He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. John 6:47

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

My God is the Rock of my refuge. Psalms 94:22

Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Revelations 22:17

The harvest truly is plenteous; but the laborers are few. Matthew 9:37

All we, like sheep, have gone astray. Isaiah 53:6

This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. Luke 15:24

Yea, though I walk through the valley and the shadow. Psalms 23:4

Come unto me all ye that labor, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Psalms 51:7

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 Timothy 1:15

He will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:7

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Psalms 119:105

God is my strength and power. 2 Samuel 22:33

All things are possible to him that believeth. Mark 9:23

Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. Luke 24:29

Abide in me, and I in you. John 15:4

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. 1 Peter 2:11

Let them shout from the top of the mountains. Isaiah 42:11

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving. Psalms 100:4

Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Michael 7:19

For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death. Mark 7:10

As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place. Proverbs 27:8

(wisdom) She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her. Proverbs 3:18

And the Lord shall make thee plenteous. Deuteronomy 28:11

He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 2 Corinthians 9:6

If ye love me, keep my commandments. John 14:16

He leads me beside the still waters. Psalms 23:3

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